

evil. There are simply no words to describe the shock, horror, and grief. There is nothing we can say to undo the horrific events of that day or to numb the wounds of the families who are grieving. The best we can hope for is that our words and prayers might somehow bring them comfort and to show them they are not alone in their sorrow.

At moments like these, the weight of despair falls heavy upon us. But we cannot forget that, even amidst the horror and sadness, there have been remarkable acts of decency. And for that, we have hope.

I think of the brave law enforcement officers and first responders who answered the call to serve and protect that day, just as they do every day. I think of the incredible outpouring of support we have seen from people across the country, most of whom have never met the victims or their families but have come forward anyway with checks, with flowers, with stuffed animals, and messages of sympathy. And of course, I think of those heroic teachers who risked, and in some cases gave their lives to save their students.

We will always remember the names and faces of people like Dawn Hochsprung and Mary Sherlach, the principal and school psychologist who died trying to disarm and dissuade gunman. They didn't think twice. They did what they knew was right.

And we will always remember 27-year-old Victoria Soto, the teacher who hid her students in closets and cabinets before bravely approaching the gunman and pointing him in the other direction. She had her whole life ahead of her, but she laid it down to save those kids.

These are the stories that keep us going. They remind us that, even in the wake of senseless violence, no individual act of evil can match the overwhelming goodness of our people. We are a resilient and fundamentally decent country, and my hope is that in the coming weeks and months we will find a way to come together to ease the pain of the families and to make some sense out of this tragedy.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the nearly quarter of a century of public service of my friend and the staff director of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Michael L. Alexander.

Mike will be leaving his position when this Congress adjourns. And he will leave quite a legacy.

Thomas Jefferson once asked the question: "What duty does a citizen owe to the government that secures the society in which he lives?" Answering his own question, Jefferson said: "A nation that rests on the will of the people must also depend on individuals to support its institutions if it is to

flourish. Persons qualified for public service should feel an obligation to make that contribution."

Mike answered that call in a way that would have made Jefferson proud.

Mike joined what was then the Governmental Affairs Committee as a staff member for the minority side in April 2001 and was a leader in negotiating and drafting the legislation that created the Department of Homeland Security and later the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act.

In recognition of his hard work and proven leadership abilities, I promoted Mike to the position of staff director in May 2006. Under his direction, the committee, through legislation and investigation, took on some of the great challenges of our time.

After Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast in August 2005, claiming more than 1,800 lives, the committee launched a major investigation into how American government at all levels failed so dramatically to safeguard its citizens from a predicted storm. Over the course of the investigation, the committee held 22 hearings, interviewed 345 witnesses, and reviewed over 800,000 documents. The, "Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared," was the most comprehensive evaluation of the Katrina catastrophe.

In 2007, the committee began a series of 14 hearings examining the root causes of violent domestic radicalization, the tactics and measures used by U.S. law enforcement at every level to prevent and deter homegrown terrorism, the role of the Internet in self radicalization, and the threat of homegrown terrorism to military personnel.

In May 2008, the committee issued a bipartisan staff report detailing the results of its investigation entitled, "Violent Islamist Extremism, The Internet, and the Homegrown Terrorist Threat." The report concluded that: "No longer is the threat just from abroad, as was the case with the attacks of September 11, 2001; the threat is now increasingly from within, from homegrown terrorists who are inspired by violent Islamist ideology to plan and execute attacks where they live. One of the primary drivers of this new threat is the use of the Internet to enlist individuals or groups of individuals to join the cause without ever affiliating with a terrorist organization."

Following the murders at Fort Hood on Nov. 5, 2009, when Maj. Nidal Hasan—a psychiatrist trained by the U.S. Army at taxpayer expense entered the Soldier Readiness Processing Center with two loaded pistols and opened fire, killing 13 and wounding 32, the committee launched a 14-month investigation into what happened and why.

The report that followed the investigation—"A Ticking Time Bomb: Counterterrorism Lessons from the U.S. Government's Failure to Prevent the Fort Hood Attack"—detailed flawed practices and communications,

both within and between the FBI and Department of Defense, that allowed Hasan to remain in the military—and even be promoted—despite many warning signs that he was becoming dangerous.

Besides the investigations, here are just a few of the successful pieces of legislation that were passed out of the committee and enacted into law on Mike's watch: The "Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006," which remade and strengthened the Federal Emergency Management Agency after the failures in responding to Hurricane Katrina; the "Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007," which made sweeping ethics and lobbying reforms; the "Implementing the Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007," which strengthened the Nation's security against terrorism by providing first responders with the resources they need to protect their communities from disaster, promoting interoperable emergency communications, requiring screening of cargo placed on passenger aircraft, securing mass transit, rail and buses; and improving the security of maritime cargo; "The Inspector General Reform Act," passed in 2008, which sought to improve government accountability by guaranteeing that qualified individuals are appointed as IGs and that IGs remain independent; "The Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011" that addresses the increasingly slow and burdensome appointments process by, among other things, removing about 170 non-policymaking positions from the list of Presidential appointments requiring Senate confirmation, thereby allowing the Senate to focus on the most important positions; and the Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge, STOCK Act, that ensures that Members of Congress are subject to the same insider information prohibitions as other Americans.

It is quite a record of accomplishment. And he did it all with a wonderful sense of humor, patience and civility.

Mr. President, I want to return to Thomas Jefferson for a moment, because he had another thought on public service that sums up one of Mike's greatest assets—spotting talent in young people and convincing them to use those talents in public service.

Jefferson once wrote to a friend: "It will remain . . . to those now coming on the stage of public affairs to perfect what has been so well begun by those going off it."

Mike may be leaving the Senate, but he leaves behind a cadre of talented and diverse individuals he recruited to join the committee and then gave increased responsibilities as their talents began to flower.

Many of these people who started out as interns or junior support staffers, have moved up the committee ranks, working on important legislation and investigations, while others have gone

on to other Congressional or executive branch offices thanks to the skills Mike helped them develop.

Prior to joining the committee, Mike served as an Executive Assistant to former Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy and had also been Espy's Legislative Director when Espy was a Congressman.

One of the joys of my Senate career was the chance to work with talented and dedicated public servants like Michael Alexander and I want to thank him for all his hard work and wish him the best of luck in whatever his next endeavor may be.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

MARYLAND LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I want to congratulate Maryland Legal Services Corporation on their 30th anniversary. Established in 1982 by the Maryland General Assembly, Maryland Legal Services Corporation raises and distributes funds to nonprofit organizations that provide civil legal assistance to low-income persons.

As chairman of Maryland Legal Services Corporation from 1988–1995, I know firsthand the extraordinary service they provide to Marylanders. Maryland Legal Services Corporation's grants have enabled 35 Maryland-area nonprofits to assist individuals in matters such as eviction, foreclosure, domestic violence, child custody, veteran's benefits, and health care. To date, Maryland Legal Services Corporation has awarded more than \$164 million in grants, assisting Marylanders in 2 million different legal matters.

In recent years Maryland Legal Services Corporation's mission has become even more critical, as more and more people have turned to our nonprofit community for civil legal services. Studies have shown that poor households will on average face from 1 to 3 legal problems a year, and Maryland is fortunate that Maryland Legal Services Corporation has worked tirelessly to ensure that our nonprofit civil legal service providers can assist its clients.

In the Western part of our State, a couple who were 2 months behind on their mortgage and close to foreclosure was provided a volunteer attorney from Allegany Law Foundation who helped them save their home.

In Harford County, Legal Aid successfully advocated for a woman who was being sued by her credit card company after she had paid thousands of dollars to a debt settlement company believing that the company would pay off her credit card debt. Legal Aid helped her cancel her contract, get a refund and have the lawsuit dismissed.

A man on the Eastern Shore contacted his local Maryland Legal Aid Bureau with concerns about black mold that was growing in his rental unit. The landlord refused to remedy

the mold situation, so Legal Aid staff investigated the situation and helped the man escrow his rent.

Had these Marylanders not had access to civil legal assistance, what would have happened? I submit that inevitably justice suffers. Judges are put in the position of trying to provide some assistance and advice—while remaining impartial—to one or two unrepresented parties before them. Social service agencies absorb additional costs from those that are unfairly denied health care or social services benefits. Neighborhoods and communities are damaged due to unjust evictions. Families are torn apart, and domestic violence and abuse continues unabated. Public health and law enforcement costs rise. The rule of law is undermined, and Americans come to believe that justice is only for the rich, not the poor.

According to one study, each Legal Aid attorney serves over 6,800 people, while there is one private attorney for every 525 people in the nation. This is not "Equal Justice Under Law", as promised by the etching at the entrance to the United States Supreme Court. I am committed to help close the justice gap by giving the Federal Legal Services Corporation the resources it needs from Congress. This must include increasing its authorized level of funding and removing harmful funding restrictions regarding class action lawsuits and attorneys fees.

Maryland Legal Services Corporation's successes over the last 30 years are impressive, and while we celebrate all they have been able to do, we also recommit ourselves to ensuring that all people have access to quality legal representation, regardless of income.●

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL CHAMPIONS

• Mrs. HUTCHISON. Mr. President, it is with great pride that I pay tribute to my alma mater, the University of Texas at Austin, and, in particular, the Texas Longhorns Volleyball team, the 2012 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I Women's Volleyball Champion.

On Saturday, December 15, 2012, the Texas Longhorns won their third national championship for women's volleyball, and first NCAA Volleyball title since 1988. After reaching their fourth NCAA Final Four in five seasons, the Longhorns outlasted the Michigan Wolverines in five sets in the semifinal to advance to Saturday's championship match. The Longhorns then proceeded to post a .438 hitting percentage in the final—breaking an NCAA record—and swept the Oregon Ducks in three sets to earn the 2012 title.

Longhorn outside hitter Bailey Webster led the way with 14 kills and a .500 hitting percentage in the championship match. After recording 96 kills and a .458 hitting percentage during the NCAA postseason, Webster was voted

as the Most Outstanding Player of the 2012 NCAA Division I Women's Volleyball Tournament. She was joined on the All-Tournament team by three Longhorn teammates: Hannah Allison, Haley Eckerman, and Sha'dare McNeal.

This was the first national championship for Jerritt Elliott, the coach of the Longhorns since 2001. Coach Elliott also guided the Longhorns to their fifth Big 12 Conference championship in six seasons and was named the 2012 American Volleyball Coaches Association AVCA Division I National Coach of the Year.

The Longhorns finished the season with a 29-4 record, and were 15-1 in conference action to claim their second straight conference title. Four Longhorn student athletes earned All-America honors. Bailey Webster and Big 12 Player of the Year Haley Eckerman were selected to the first team, and Sha'Dare McNeal and Khat Bell received honorable mention recognition.

Winning the national championship is an achievement which will long be cherished by each of these Longhorns: senior Sha'Dare McNeal; juniors Hannah Allison, Megan Futch, Sarah Palmer, and Bailey Webster; sophomores Khat Bell, Haley Eckerman, and Madelyn Hutson; freshmen Kat Brooks, Nicole Dalton, Sara Hattis, Molly McCage, and Amy Neal; coaches Jerritt Elliott, Salima Rockwell, Erik Sullivan, and special assistant Nathan Mendoza; women's athletics director Christine Plonsky; and University of Texas at Austin president Bill Powers.

One of my favorite scenes in all of Texas is found on the original Forty Acres of my alma mater. There rising 307 feet at the center of campus is the University of Texas Tower. The tower is a beacon for all Longhorns day and night, when it is flooded with light and set aglow against the nighttime sky. It is a particularly spectacular sight when Longhorn student athletes win a national championship, and the tower is bathed in burnt orange with a number "1" displayed on all sides to mark the achievement.

With the 2012 Women's Volleyball National Championship, the U.T. Tower has now been illuminated to celebrate 50 athletic national championships. Congratulations to the National Champion Texas Longhorns Women's Volleyball team, and Hook 'em Horns!●

• Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I congratulate the University of Texas women's volleyball team for their national championship victory over the University of Oregon. The Lady Longhorns swept the Ducks 3-0 to secure their first NCAA title since 1988.

It was a fitting capstone for a remarkable season, in which the Longhorns finished 29-4 and rallied from a 2-1 deficit against Michigan in the national semifinals. Their championship game against Oregon drew the second-largest crowd in tournament history.